

“Greening”

Your Eating Habits



The average U.S. household is responsible for about eight tons of CO₂e emissions annually related to their food consumption.

Fortunately, these emissions are very flexible, as we can change the carbon footprint of our diet with every meal choice.

Unlike the other components of our personal climate footprints where CO₂ is the major offender, half of our food emissions are in the form of methane and nitrous oxide.

TIPS

For “Greening” Your Eating Habits

- Avoid wasting food
- Eat more whole foods and limit processed & packaged goods
- Buy sustainably produced foods whenever possible
- Support local foods whenever possible
- Learn about food distribution in your area



Life Cycle of Food Systems

When looking at the full life-cycle of the food system, including production, transportation and distribution of food, the vast majority of food related emissions (83 percent) derive from the production phase, with transportation accounting for just 11 percent. Modern agriculture relies on large expenditures of fossil fuels at all levels of food production and distribution, from plowing and fertilizing fields, to transporting crops to storage, to processing and packaging products, to the final trip to the consumer's home (where further energy is used to store and prepare food).

Avoid Waste

Americans throw away about a quarter of the food we prepare, at a cost of a billion dollars a year, according to the U.S. EPA. This waste comes from households, restaurants, and cafeterias and doesn't include the food wasted in processing, transportation, and grocery stores. Food scraps made up 12.5 percent of the solid waste generated by American households in 2007.

Eat Whole Foods Less Processing Less Packaging

Processing and packaging foods is an energy-intensive practice.

If we shop for whole foods, like fresh vegetables and grains, instead of packaged and processed foods, which are often high in calories and low in nutrition, we can reduce the energy demand required to transport and produce food commodities.

Supporting Local and Regional Foods

Many local restaurants and grocery stores are using and carrying local or regional foods, which create fewer emissions than food from distant places, since lengthy transportation is not required. The local food Co-Op or seasonal Farmers Markets are wonderful sources of local foods, but the larger chain stores are also starting to carry a larger supply regional and sustainably produced organic foods.



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